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ABSTRACT

The process of invitational teaching involves the creation of an optimal situation where teachers with positive perceptions of students interact with students who feel good about themselves. The content of this invitational process is a type of self-belief extended from one person to the other, a belief that each individual has an unknown potential only partially actualized, and is ultimately an able, valuable, and responsible human being and can behave as such. The skillful invitational teacher, then, is someone who can develop a trusting relationship with students, is competent in assessing their personal self theories, and can communicate meaningful messages. A number of questions still need to be addressed by researchers, however, concerning the identification of invitational messages, proper developmental patterns, reasons for not extending invitations, ethical dimensions, reasons for rejection of invitations, and identification of disinvited students. Furthermore, the overall concept of invitational teaching is limited in its approach to content. To be effective, teachers must conjoin their invitational teaching skills with an understanding of the major concepts, methodologies, and organization of a particular field of knowledge. The invitational teacher must perceive not only the importance of knowing something, but of how one knows something, i.e., how we make sense of the world. The invitational teacher, then, is someone who perceives students as fellow human beings and knowledge as vital inquiry and is skillful in coordinating these relationships through behaviors so that students are invited to learn. (DS)

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INVITATIONS TO WHAT?:

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

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INVITATIONS TO WHAT?: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

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This critique examines the concept of invitational teaching proffered by William W. Purkey in his book, Inviting School Success: A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching and Learning (Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1978) in terms of what it says and what it leaves out. An extension of the invitational concept is developed by the author to deal with the neglected cognitive domain.

In Part I the concept of invitation is analyzed emphasizing its perceptual and reciprocal basis. The content of the invitational process is seen to be a type of self belief which will better enable a student to modify or expand his/her personal self theory so as to see himself/herself as able, valuable, and responsible. The first part ends with specific recommendations to researchers for refining the concept. Part II deals with the necessity for including the world of and for knowledge in the process of invitational teaching. A model is developed which includes the addition of this domain. Part III considers a more detailed perceptual and behavioural description of the invitational teacher based on this extended model.

The paper concludes with the comment that Professor Purkey has presented a vivid and important description of the invitational person in the school setting. The concept, however, can be refined to deal with the teacher as teacher.

INVITATIONS TO WHAT?:

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

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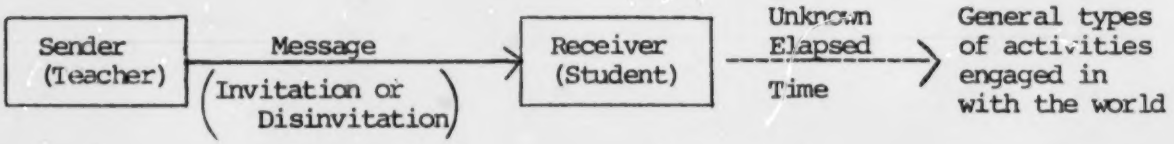
The concept of inviting school success as formulated by W. W. Purkey (1978) is a well-written follow-up to his other successful book -- Self Concept and School Achievement (1970) and is an attempt to more fully systematize, operationalize, and personalize a self concept approach to teaching and learning. This is no easy task, to be sure, and successful, ultimate completion of a fully validated and defensible self concept pedagogy would be a monumental contribution to those involved in the educational enterprise. However, sad to say, due to the nature and complexity of the world we live in, very few important things come to us in their final form, and those of a monumental nature usually only attract pigeons. That may be a satisfactory target for those who live in the sky but, as Hirst and Peters stated "to be near the earth is not altogether unbecoming for those who live on it." (pg. 98, 1971) In writing this paper then I accept the invitation of Professor Purkey to attempt to bring the concept of invitational teaching "down to earth" by examining it from an internal and external perspective and pointing out possible implications it has for the development of teachers. This paper then will be in three parts. In Part I, from an internal perspective, the model of invitational teaching will be summarized and analyzed. Questions which will be answered in this section will include: "what are

we inviting students to do?" and "what types of research would be useful in unifying and elaborating this theory?" Thus this first part of the paper will be an invitation to researchers and practitioners to consider certain types of research and experiences which might possibly refine invitational theory. Next, in Part II, this paper will look at what seems to be left out of the invitational approach and proffer another aspect to the model. More specifically it will look at the relationship between invitational teaching and the cognitive domain and suggest a cognitive orientation teachers might seek to develop to better invite students to meaningfully participate in the world of knowledge. Finally, in the last part of this paper, a sketch of the invitational teacher based on this extended model will be presented.

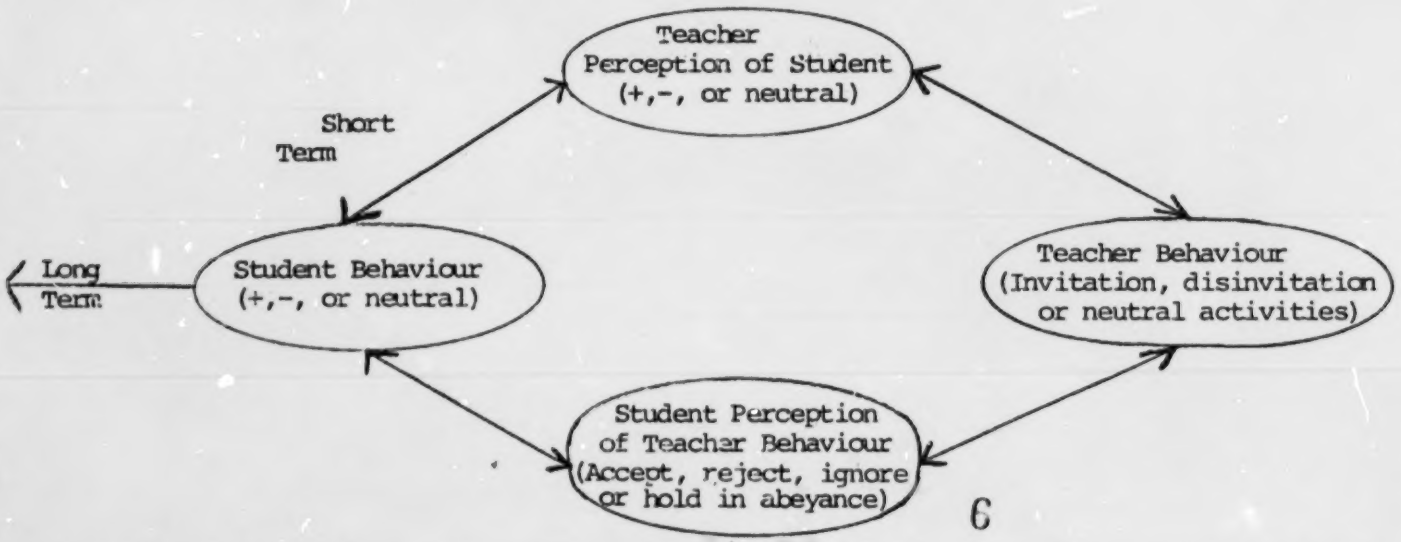
Part I: An Internal Perspective

Invitational teaching as presented by Purkey (1978) is a theory of interpersonal communication. With its emphasis on the self, the self system and the processes by which the self is created, maintained and enhanced it appears to borrow heavily from symbolic interactionism (Manis and Meltzer, 1967). Using only this framework for interpreting the process, invitations and disinvitations are symbols which are transmitted to individuals by significant others and the environment and which thus effect how that receiving individual sees himself/herself and the world he/she is in. A person who has been effectively invited to see himself/herself as able, valuable and responsible will, most probably, be able to act meaningfully upon the world and live a

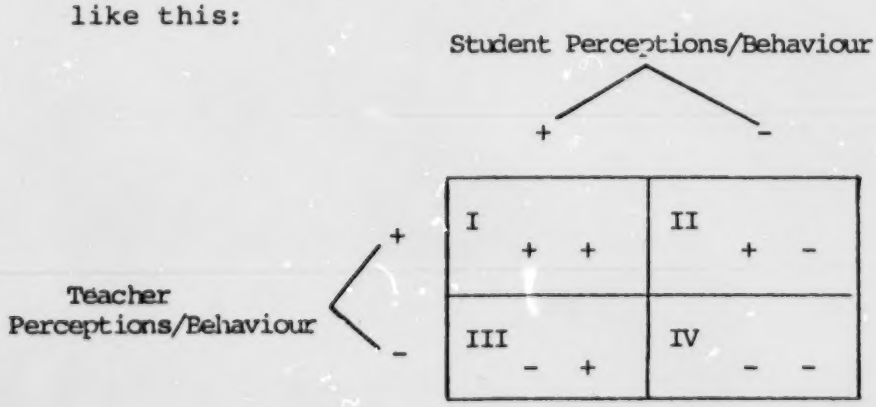
life filled with integrity and choice. On the other hand those who have continually been disinvited will look upon themselves as rather despicable characters who are inferior in most respects and will have to continually struggle to find positive meaning and fulfillment in a world which is continually attacking. A simple schematic diagram of this symbolic interactionist interpretation might look like this:



This however is not only a simple interpretation, it misses the fundamental perceptual and interactional basis of the theory. A more accurate depiction of invitational process should focus on the relationship of perceptions to behaviour (Combs, Richards and Richards, 1976) and the reciprocal nature of the interactional situation. A diagram with this emphasis would look like this:



This expanded diagram calls attention to several new aspects not available in the previous more simple model. In this second model perceptions are seen as the directors of behaviour but also are related to the behaviour of the other person or persons involved in the interaction. Although the cyclical process can be started anywhere, if you begin with the teacher it might go like this: teachers who hold positive perceptions of students are most likely to extend positive invitations to students. Depending on how a student perceives himself/herself and the person extending the invitation, a student exercises choice in accepting, rejecting, holding in abeyance or ignoring the message of the teacher. This perception will be fed back to the teacher by way of the student's behaviour, although there may be some long term residual effects. It should be noted that the process can continue and contains two-way arrows at each aspect to emphasize that it is not a simple linear process -- some students, because of their perceptions and behaviours, seem to invite teacher invitations or disinvitations. The use of a matrix will make this idea clearer. If teachers and students could be divided into two groups, those with positive perceptions and those with negative perceptions, we have a situation like this:



In square #1 we have the optimal situation where teachers who have positive perceptions about students interact with students who feel good about themselves. The goal of invitational teaching is to increase the number of interactions in this square. On the other extreme (square #4) we have the opposite situation -- teachers and students both exhibiting negative perceptions and behaviour. The invitational teacher will make a deliberate and conscious effort to break out of this situation. This would involve continually extending invitations to students with low self esteem (square #2) even though these may be rejected or ignored at first. It is only by moving through this stage that there is a chance to reach the optimal state (square #1). There would also seem to be, sad to say, some cases where students who feel good about themselves and behave in positive ways interact with teachers who perceive and treat them negatively (square #3). Here we have a process which could potentially be moving to a more negative situation (square #4). Thus the invitational/disinvitational process can move in either a positive or negative direction. The invitational teacher Purkey writes about is an individual who is aware of this process, and who intends to enhance his/her students' concept of themselves through the use of personalized, skillful invitations.

Moving from the process of inviting to the content of the invitational message the more basic question perhaps should be asked -- What are we inviting students to do? Purkey's invitational process is not intended to be a form of conditioning, although it may appear to have behavioural overtones. Although it is through a behaviour that invitations are transmitted, and their ultimate effect may be a

behavioural outcome, the basis of the invitational process is perceptual. Thus the content of the invitational process is a certain type of perception and depends on the willingness of persons to extend and receive it. But again what is it that we are inviting students to do? If it is not a conditioning process, then we are not intending to have students mindlessly accept and act upon the bit of information that they are able, valuable and responsible. Rather, the content of the invitational process is a type of self belief extended from one person to another person for the sake of being considered. Person A, in inviting Person B, is actually saying "I have something which I believe about you and which I wish you to consider. That something I believe is that you are ultimately an able, valuable and responsible human being and that your can behave as such." The basis of this belief is a type of reasoned, leap of faith. At its most developed level it assumes that people in general, and more particularly this specific individual, have an unknown potential which is only being partially actualized, is important in himself/herself and has the ability to choose and lead a meaningful existence. In extending an invitation then, one person is asking another to make this leap of faith about himself/herself.

Ultimately the invitational teacher is transmitting skillful, personalized messages to his/her students which, if accepted, give students significant information to better enable them to modify and extend their personal theory as to who they are and what they may become. Rather than saying that an invitation effects the self concept of a student it is probably more accurate to say that in accepting an invitation a student shows that he/she is willing to

expand or reconstruct his/her self theory, that personalized "hierarchical organization of concepts that assimilates experience and guides behaviour" (Epstein, 1973, pg. 414). The skillful invitational teacher then is someone who is able to develop a trusting relationship with his students (is seen as a person of good will), is competent in assessing their personal self theories, and can communicate meaningful messages which, if accepted, have a potential chance of enabling a student to enhance his effectiveness in dealing with the world.

If this is what invitational teaching is in the abstract, what does it invite those of us in the concrete world of teaching and research to do? In an unpublished paper entitled "Inviting School Success: Twelve Tentative Assumptions" (1977) Professor Purkey presented some basic ideas regarding invitational teaching. Some of these will now be looked at for the purpose of raising questions regarding the clarity and direction of the theory.

1. Invitations and disinvitations are found in every aspect of schooling and take countless forms and shapes.

If these messages exist everywhere and are in countless forms, how are they best to be found? Can outside raters be trained to decipher the central attibute of a message or does it only depend on the perceptions of students involved in the situation? If it depends on student perceptions, what is the best way to get at these? How accurate and consistent are student self reports in dealing with invitations? Perhaps a methodology could be developed whereby outside observers would attempt to get the "feel" for the

perceptual structure of students in a school situation. This could provide the basis for evaluating situations according to their student perceived invitational qualities.

3. Students cannot develop optimally without being invited to do so. Students want to be confirmed as able, valuable, and responsible by significant others.

Is there a general developmental pattern which invitations aim at? If so, can it be broken down into its most basic components for various age levels? Are there different types of invitations which seem to work better with different types of individuals or different groups? If there are, how can educators best be taught to identify and use them? Are there some personality clashes which make it difficult for invitations to be extended or received?

6. The teacher always has the power to determine the quality and quantity of invitations and disinvitations extended to students.

If it is always within the teacher's power to extend invitations, what reasons are given for not doing so always? What environmental factors (Administrative structure, size of school, location of school, etc.) seem to enhance or diminish the likelihood of invitations being extended? Are there individual styles for extending invitations? If so, to what extent can teachers be taught or encouraged do develop their personal styles?

9. When the teacher extends an invitation, he or she has the responsibility to insure that the student has a reasonable chance of accepting and acting upon it successfully.

What are the ethical dimensions involved in extending invitations? Is there a minimum invitational level which could be identified and expected from each teacher? Are there model invitational teachers whose perceptions and behaviours could be systematically analyzed?

10. Because an invitation is rejected, it does not mean the teacher is rejected. There are countless reasons why some students are unable or unwilling to accept the most well-intentioned invitations.

To what extent can we determine the reasons why invitations are accepted or rejected? Are there situations in which no possible invitations could be accepted? Are there determinable levels of acceptance or rejection of invitations? To what extent does the surface behaviour of individuals represent their actual acceptance or rejection of an invitation?

12. From an invitational vantage point, there is as much a need to be concerned with the "disinvited" student as with "disadvantaged" and disabled" ones.

How can disinvited students be identified? Are there some basic categories of disinvited students? Can special environments be created to meet the invitational needs of disinvited students? Is there a special type of training teachers need for working with the severely disinvited student?

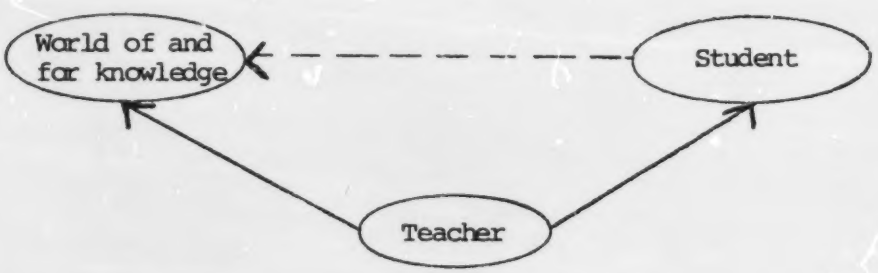
The invitational approach to teaching seems to have heuristic value for both practitioners and researchers. For the classroom teacher it offers some direction and practical suggestions. For the researcher it raises many possibilities for extended investigation. Inevitabily though, it would seem that the long range usefulness of the theory will depend on the extent to which it can be refined and extended.

Part II: Another Aspect to Consider

As was stated earlier in this paper the process of inviting students is a theory of interpersonal communications. While most everyone would agree that a positive, inviting relationship with students would seem to be a necessary part of teaching, by itself it may not be sufficient. What seems to be left out? Very simply, if it is accepted that the act of teaching is an activity which involves somebody teaching something to somebody, the something, the content of what in taught, appears to be limited in this approach. Perhaps it could be reasoned that the content of invitational teaching is the message that student is able, valuable and responsible and as such could potentially be communicated through most any type of content. But is this really all we can say that teaching ought to be? Using only this approach there seems to be a danger, as expressed by Freire (1970), that existence is reduced to mere subjectivism and the reality of a world outside of an individual's present perceptions is minimized or ignored. While it could be argued very strongly that ignoring the subjective processes of the student would usually have negative

pedagogical effects, this in itself is not sufficient justification for saying that only subjective processes are important in teaching.

Perhaps this point can be made clearer by way of the following model emphasizing the teacher's relationship both to the student and to the world of and for knowledge:



This model attempts to take seriously the idea that the teaching act involves somebody teaching something to somebody, in addition to not negating the basic tenet of invitations that we can only invite students to consider something. By emphasizing the teacher's relationship both to the student and the world of and for knowledge the model points out the limitation of only considering one aspect. At one extreme, the person who only has a positive personal relationship with his students but has nothing else to teach them may be an effective counsellor but is not engaged in a teaching activity. Likewise, an individual who is very much involved with the world of and for knowledge, may be a dedicated scholar but without a relationship to students it is questionable whether he/she could be considered a teacher. This is certainly not to say that a teacher should not engage in these

activities but rather that there is more to teaching than each one considered separately. The model offered here posits the notion that a teacher, through a combination of his/her relationships with the world of and for knowledge and his/her personal relationship with his/her students, invites them to participate personally and meaningfully in the world of and for knowledge. Obviously this model needs clarification and should be brought down to earth before it can be very useful.

Since the relationship of the teacher to the student was strongly emphasized earlier in this paper this does not need to be elaborated on again. Rather the neglected area of Purkey's invitational concept, the teacher's relationship with the world of and for knowledge needs to be clarified at this time. If the act of teaching is thought to be more than only relating to students what, in general, is it that a teacher should also relate to? The previous diagram stressed the importance of the teacher's relationship to the world of and for knowledge but what, in the world, does this mean? Quite basically, if the educated person is thought to be someone who has an understanding of something (Peters, 1972) then the something which is understood and related to is the world of and for knowledge. The world of knowledge, as the term is used here, is thought to be that type of knowledge which is public and cumulative, that which we consider to be a meaningfully structured and growing body of knowledge. The world for knowledge, on the other hand, refers to the world as a whole, which is potentially knowable. A teacher's relationship then to

the world of and for knowledge involves his/her understanding and personal meaning of the major concepts, methodologies and organization of one or various bodies of knowledge in addition to the ability to use this knowledge to meaningfully approach the world as a whole. Using Scheffler's "Philosophical Models of Teaching" (1967) to expand this idea, the teacher with a vital, meaningful relationship with the world of and for knowledge possesses an understanding of some area or areas of public knowledge, has insights about its usefulness and applicability and applies general and impartial rules governing the assessment of issues related to it. More succinctly, the teacher with a meaningful relationship to the world of and more knowledge is interested in and knows something worthwhile, and is able to expand, apply and criticize this knowledge. If this relationship is conjoined with a positive relationship with students we thus have a teacher who is perceived as a person of good will, who knows the "lived world" of his/her students and is able to relate the world of and for knowledge to their experiences, and who invites them to meaningfully participate in a multiple evolving tradition of thought and understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Israel Scheffler emphasized this cognitive orientation most eloquently when he stated:

> In teaching, we do not impose our wills on students, but introduce him to many mansions of the heritage in which we ourselves strive to live, and to the improvement of which we ourselves are dedicated. (1967, pg. 134)

The next part of this paper will consider a more detailed perceptual and behavioural description of the invitational teacher based upon this extended model.

Part III: A Description of the Invitational Teacher

If it is accepted that the invitational teacher is a caring, reflective person who is able to establish a meaningful, positive relationship with his/her students and the world of and for knowledge, then this model could be rendered more meaningful by a further perceptual and behavioural analysis of each of the component parts.

Perceptually, in relationship to students, it would appear that a strong case could be developed for the necessity of the type perceptual basis studied and described by Wasicsko (1977). That study, in summarizing other research in the area, offered evidence that successful teachers, as perceived by their administrators, peers, and students, differed significantly from teachers perceived as unsuccessful in terms of their perceptions of themselves, students, orientation and frame of reference. Quite simply, successful teachers saw themselves as a part of mankind, saw students as able, were people oriented and had a large frame of reference. Certainly it would seem that these perceptions would be desirable for any person in the helping professions. In addition, however, these could be especially significant for teachers involved in the process of inviting students to participate in the world of and for knowledge. For example, the person who sees himself/herself as a part of mankind could very easily see himself/herself as vitally

connected to mankind's relentless and often frustrating inquiry into the nature and meaning of knowledge and significant action. The teacher with a positive perception in this area would have a feel for both the necessity and difficulty involved in this pursuit. Likewise, a teacher who perceives students as able could extend this to seeing students as having the potential to comprehend situations, solve problems, and communciate meaningfully and intelligently about the world. In order to do this successfully it would be important to perceive the relationship of the often abstract world of knowledge to the feelings, thoughts, desires, predicaments and personal self theories of ones' students (Novak, 1976). Thus the people orientation perception could be very important in enabling a teacher to desire to go from the abstract to the concrete "lived world" of students. Finally, the large frame of reference perception for the invitational teacher could be very useful in enabling him/her to differentiate the large picture of what he/she is inviting students to participate in from the particular instances and examples used to invite this participation. The invitational teacher in this dimension would have a solid cognitive goal to pursue but could be flexible and empathetic in using means to attain this goal.

Although the teacher's perceptual framework just described obviously overlaps with the cognitive orientation of teaching, there also seem to be some specific cognitive perceptions which appear to be necessary. If teaching is perceived as a deliberate activity to invite students to participate meaningfully in the

world of and for knowledge, then the invitational teacher, as teacher, should certainly be committed to the deliberate goal of nurturing intellectual expansiveness so that students can increase in literacy, thinking, and communication through various mediums and situations. This cognitive orientation does not have to be preceived as an abstract end to be revered in itself but rather can be seen as a highly significant means for students and teachers to explore, explain and invent knowledge regarding who they are and how the world works. Taking this one step further, it would also seem that the invitational teacher not only perceives the importance of knowing something but also perceives the importance of knowing how you know and examining and refining the processes by which we make sense of the world and ourselves. This is no easy process and it may be, as so cogently argued by Marc Belth (1965), what education as a discipline is all about.

The invitational teacher then is someone who perceives students as fellow human beings and knowledge as vital inquiry and, most importantly, is skillful in coordinating these relationships so that students are invited to actively participate in the world of meaningful knowledge. Since skillful coordination of relationships is ultimately expressed through behaviours, this is a good way to bring perceptions back down to earth.

The behavioural aspect of interpersonal communication is strongly emphasized in Inviting School Success (Purkey, 1978) and, in addition, numerous specific examples are given of types of

intentional messages which communicate to students that they are able, valuable and responsible. Teachers skillful in transmitting these types of messages have developed the ability to attend to specific student behaviours. Extending personal invitations however is not the only skill useful to teachers in relating well to students. In addition, it may be necessary at time to confront students with problems and resolve various sorts of conflicts with them. The skills stressed by Thomas Gordon in Teacher Effectiveness Training (1974) could be very useful to the invitational teacher in attending to these matters. Behaviourly, it would seem most important for the invitational teacher to be knowledgeable and skilled in a wide variety of areas, expecially those where the typical type of response usually has harmful effects on students. Being able to use intentionally and naturally, non-typical types of behaviour to communciate meaningfully with students would seem to be the trademark of the invitational teacher.

In addition, the invitational teacher would be knowledgeable and skilled in using behaviours which invite students to participate meaningfully in the world of and for knowledge. Developing skills which invite students to critically examine how they perceive the world, how they are affected by various types of social situations and what factors they consider in making ethical decisions (Novak, 1976) would certainly seem to be pedagocially important for the invitational teacher. More specific types of teaching practices could be enhanced by personalizing various of the models of teaching developed by Weil and Joyce (1978(a)), (1978(b)), (Weil, Joyce and Kluwin, 1978).

These models offer a variety of teaching strategies which could be useful in inviting students to better process information, learn skills, develop social problem solving techniques, and think critically about how they personally perceive reality. To the invitational teacher methods are an important tool for reaching desirable ends. Finally, the invitational teacher should be willing and able to disclose to students his/her personal encounters in trying to make sense of the world. This sharing of success and frustration in coming to grips with the world of and for knowledge often adds a meaningful and significant element to this all to often remote enterprise.

Invitational teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the task of inviting students to participate in the process of making sense and transforming the human predicament. They care enough to learn and personalize the appropriate skills.

Final Comment

This paper was an attempt to analyze and expand the concept of invitations developed by Professor Purkey. It took the position that, though he has made an important contribution to educators by describing the invitational person in the school setting, the concept can still be refined further to consider the specific activities of teachers as teachers. If we accept the idea that the educator should be a person first and only after that a professional, then the concept of the invitational person can be an important and necessary foundation for the development of the invitational teacher.

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